

The Role of Traditional Leaders in Governance Structure Through the Observance of Taboos in Cape Coast, Kumasi and Teshie Societies of Ghana

Emmanuel Abeku Essel

National University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary

The specific objective of the study was to identify the role of traditional leaders in Cape Coast, Kumasi and Teshie in the governance structure of their societies through the observance of taboos. It was to have a good understanding of what constitutes governance and good governance in the context of the indigenous set-up; to assess the current nature of governance related taboos; and to evaluate the impact of contemporary society on taboos and the consequence of any impact of contemporary society on the taboos on indigenous governance. The research was guided by Creswell's knowledge on research paradigm to describe a researcher's philosophical view and conceptualization of reality. The research adopted mixed method approach in achieving the objective of the research by obtaining empirical data for the research questions. Two sets of instruments were adopted for data gathering. The first instrument was an interview guide that was used to solicit structured data from the respondents in order to elicit more candid and objective replies. The second instrument was a questionnaire, which was used in order to gather the exact responses relevant to the research from participants. The study found out that traditional rulers occupy unique position, hence in order to maintain certain standards to please their subjects on whose authority they rule, they cannot avoid observing taboos. It further showed that the Chieftaincy institution is an institution that cannot be done away with. It is recommended that both citizens and non-citizens in these traditional societies should be made to appreciate, respect and observe taboos associated with taboo days as a means to promote unity, peace and governance.

Keywords: traditional authorities, taboos, governance, societies, observance

Introduction

Chieftaincy is one of the few traditional institutions in Ghana that has still survived despite the influx of Western cultures and their consequent disregard and contempt for some Ghanaian customs. Traditional African governing institutions are varied. Chieftaincy is considered as a male dominated sphere in Ghana. Skalník (2004) argued that, because chiefs serve as custodians and advocates of the interests of local communities within the larger political system, chieftaincy can provide the foundation on which to create new mixed governance systems. Chieftainship systems, for the most part, converge with consensual systems at the grassroots level. Chiefs at the grassroots level are accountable to chiefs at the higher level and seldom have the

Emmanuel Abeku Essel, PhD Student, Society and Governance Department, National University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary.

ability to subvert the interests of the nation. Taboos and governance have been accepted as one force in the sense that a community's governance cannot be firmly achieved without taboos. Odotei and Hagan (2002) postulated that if one is installed as a chief, his credibility as a chief may be challenged if the said person does not swear. Since governance is about legitimacy, the sworn oath gives leadership legitimacy. It follows that his acts remain legal to the degree that a chief adheres to the oath of office. It is very clear that non-compliance with the oath of office is similar to breaking a taboo and breaking a taboo is often a violation of the law. As mentioned earlier, a leader may lose credibility on a violation of any of the laws enshrined in the office oath and thus will not rule again. The basic laws giving legitimacy and governing the actions of the leader in relation to the governed have been violated. Elements of good governance are contained in the exchange of taboos in the chief's council of state between a chief and the governed by their representatives. Despite the fact that the idea of good governance is perceived by development actors in various ways, there is increasing agreement that it includes more than just the government institution itself. The development community is currently pursuing creative solutions to overcome local development and poverty alleviation problems, decentralization, and local governance, and increase the efficacy of aid transfer. Local government refers to a polycentric structure in which a range of players are involved in the decision-making process of local public bodies (Denters, 2011). Democratic decentralization is also linked to the ideals of governance, such as political engagement, responsiveness and transparency (Blair, 2000; Smith, 2007).

Traditional law or government has found manifestation in ways such as religious leadership, linear leadership, extended family leadership, and leadership (Assimeng, 1996; Ray & Reddy, 2003; Bekoe, 2007). According to Mukyala-Mukiika (1998), there is some form of duality of authority at the local level of governance. One form of authority consists of people who derive their legitimate right to govern from the fact that they have been elected and regard the people as a collection of individuals, each with a set of specific rights. Traditional institutions present the platform on which traditional authorities express their authority. These institutions in turn form the leadership structures within individual communities. Their roles and functions ensure that people comply with rules, norms and beliefs. Despite several years of Western domination, the decisions about governance and sustainable development still rest on traditional institutional concepts because the powers of traditional authorities are best expressed in these institutions. As has been rightly stated by Kendie and Guri (2004), the inability to reduce the growing incidence of poverty and underdevelopment could be attributed to the tendency of formal development organisation's approach to local knowledge systems and practices without recourse to including indigenous knowledge.

Traditional authorities in Ghana, however, are referred to as "chiefs" by the generic name (Boaten, 1994; Ray & Reddy, 2003). Scholars who have enriched our knowledge of traditional rule in Ghana include Bentsi-Enchil (1971); Fynn (1974); Ollennu (1977); Arhin (1985); Gyekye (1996); Kendie and Guri (2004); and Odotei and Awedoba (2006). These authors generally agree on two main forms of traditional rule. These two major classifications are the centralized political system (cephalic societies) and acephalic societies, or what is described as the 'lost decentralized' political system. Abotchie (2006) suggested that the pre-colonial indigenous administration in cephalic societies in Ghana was bureaucratic in that there were highly formalized systems or procedures within the chiefs' hierarchy. Traditional bureaucracy had elements of decentralization and citizen participation (Lutz & Linder, 2004). Arhin (1985) argued that "the assumption of these powers put an end to the traditional states as independent, political communities" (p. 89). As a result, the Sovereign Kings and other office-holders have been transformed by the European masters into leaders or traditional leaders.

Governance and the Observation of Taboos

Taboo can be applied in two ways, that is to say, a narrower sense of tradition or solely religious use, whereas a wider sense reflects its use in socio-economic and political contexts (Boamah, 2015). In a narrow context, the phrase “a set of religious or religious prohibitions established by the traditional religious authorities as instruments of moral motivation, guidance and means to protect the sanctity of the sanctuaries and, nevertheless, the well-being of their worshipping communities” has been tabooed (Boamah, 2015). In Ghana, for example, some people take a conservationist approach and claim that cultural values and taboos have played a positive and important role in grassroots cultures and continue to indirectly affect contemporary culture. To date, some of the taboos have been structured to support the economy and efficiency at the personal and communal levels (Osei, 2006). To add to the dialogue on the importance of the institution of leadership in Africa, Abotchie (2006) summarized the positions of leaders in Ghana as leaders, chief priests, agents of creation, markers of identity, as well as custodians of stool lands and property, and sees these various roles as embodiments of people’s values, dreams, concerns and ambitions. As a result of democratic governance, Ghanaian chiefs have lost a large part of their duties to the central government. However, chiefs also have significant roles to play in Ghanaian communities. In view of the many components of leadership in maintaining good governance and growth, the institution and its mandates and limitations have been well enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana since independence. Taboos linked to the leadership have not been entirely wiped out, but some have been retained, some have been changed, whilst some have been toned down to please all and sundry in a given community. According to Sarpong (1977), the effects of breaking the taboo may have a whole civilization and a person, both mystical and physical.

While taboos defy categorisation, it is observed that grouping them is of benefit to the understanding of taboos. Based on the observations made by Brempong (2006) that taboos were symbols of leadership and Busia (1968) that taboos influenced the actions of chiefs, it can be inferred that taboos are clearly encapsulated and include some of the elements of good governance as advocated by the World Bank and used in the governance of indigenous societies. In alluding to the fact that the life and thought of the African revolve around taboos, one is not far from right. Governance is one unique area where this is well manifested, where all those who matter in leadership, such as chiefs, queen mothers, priests, priestesses, and family heads avoid having a dysfunctional relationship with the supernatural through strict taboo observation. As a consequence of taboos, such imbalances cause misery not just for the leaders but also for the communities they rule. Africans still practice and observe elements of their faith, including taboos, despite the decline in values and adherence to Africa Traditional Religion (ATR). Depending on the perspective from which governance is perceived, this can differ from the administrative efficiency and the quality of basic services to the population at one end of the continuum through to ideals of democratic decision-making and participatory growth somewhere in the middle, and a human rights-based approach to development at the other end. This is mirrored in the way different donor and support organizations interpret the term. In the sense of this paper, good governance refers to the careful manner of governing, guiding or directing citizens. While governance was part of Ghanaian cultures, it appears to the researcher’s best knowledge that the aspect of taboos and governance has been left unattended. Questions on what is the current essence of governance-related taboos? Are the taboos still being followed? What is their place in indigenous governance at the moment? What is the influence of modern culture on these taboos? As not many studies have been carried out using the three research areas, they request to be answered to shed light

on contemporary traditional governance of African societies, such as the Akan, Fante and Ga Societies of Ghana. This study seeks to identify the role of traditional leaders in governance structure through the observance of taboos in Cape Coast, Kumasi and Teshie societies of Ghana

Study Area and Methodology

Study Areas

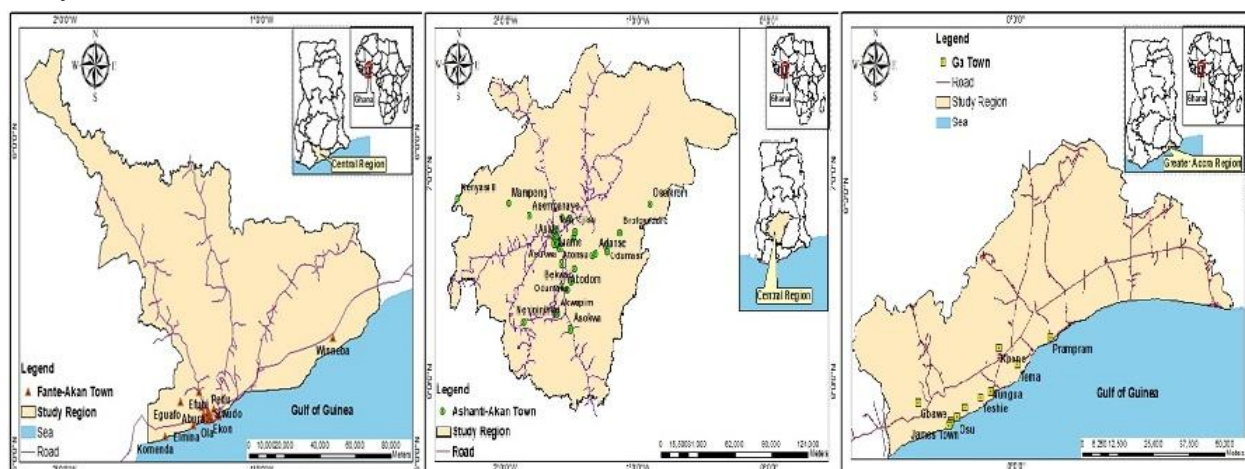


Figure 1. Maps of the Study Areas (Source: Author's own construct, 2019).

The study was conducted at Cape Coast in the Central Region, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region and Teshie in the Greater Accra Region. Cape Coast is the capital of the Central Region Cape Coast as shown in Figure 1 is found within Longitudes 1°1' to 1.41° W of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitudes 5°20' N. The Cape Coast Metropolis has 40,386 households with a total household population of 140,405. With this, 3.5 persons per household constitute the average household size. Historically, chiefs have been at the forefront of traditional governance over the years to the satisfaction of many, the effective exercise of their executive, legislative and judicial functions. The chiefs are the custodians of the land and trust the culture of the people. The future of the institution is in the hands of the governed, who continue to show respect and trust in the institution in the face of a number of challenges.

Kumasi on the other hand is bounded on the north by the Brong Ahafo Region, on the east by the Eastern Region and on the south by the western and central regions. It lies between Latitudes 6°30' N and 6°45' N, and Longitudes 1°35' W and 1°45' W. The study area is covered by topographic map sheets 0602A4 and 0602C4, and covers an area of approximately 55,558.17 hectares (ha). Kumasi is Ghana's second biggest city. It is a highly populated town only comparable to Accra (the capital town of Ghana). Between 1990 and 2000, its population almost tripled to more than a million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005). Traditional authorities remain strong in Kumasi, which is the seat of the Asantehene—effectively the king of the Asante. In practical terms, the main lever of power which the Asantehene possesses is that of land allocation, a process which is exercised through a network of local chiefs. According to the folk tale, the Ashanti passed from generation to generation. They became the overlords, who later became the Ashanti/Akan Empire. The Ashanti have been able to effectively govern their territories through a complex governance system that has taken into account different aspects of their cultural backgrounds. An example of this would be if a township was captured during the war, instead of killing or removing the chief from power, the Ashanties would make the losing chief pledge

to their allegiance to the Ashanti kingdom. In the Ashanti culture, a written constitution was established that set order and customs in stone.

Teshie is a coastal town in the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipality of the Greater Accra region in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005). Teshie lies west to Ga Mashie, Osu and La and east of Nungua and Tema. It directly shares borders with La and Nungua. The community is composed of inhabitants from almost every part of the Ga-Dangme State. Teshie is thus, a community of mixed people with the majority, coming from La. The rest of the inhabitants are people from Nungua, Tema, Lashibi, Ga Mashie, Osu, and Prampram. This characteristic of the last Ga town, being a settler-community, is evident in the indigenous names of the inhabitants in the various principal houses (Wei) that make up the five quarters of Teshie.

Methodology

The study is a mixed method research based on qualitative and quantitative data using semi-structured interviews. According to Miller and Salkind (2019), case study research requires gathering multiple forms of data to develop in-depth understanding of an issue. The study focused mostly on chiefs who are the key players in traditional governance in the study areas as the unit of analysis to ascertain the current developments in the practice. The use of mixed approaches as distinct from either qualitative or quantitative methodology is increasing in importance and this technique has been more generally accepted with the publishing of a variety of texts dealing directly with mixed methodologies (Creswell, 2003; Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Centered on the overall purpose of the analysis and the research priorities established, the researcher used a mixed method in the case research approach to the factors of taboo and governance in Ghana. Rocco et al. (2003) indicated that experiments using mixed approaches for this purpose are “explicitly finding synergistic gains from the integration of both post-positivist and constructivist paradigms. The fundamental premise is that science is better when it incorporates research paradigms, so a fuller interpretation of human phenomena is obtained” (p. 21). In this research, a mixed method approach was used as a triangulation to validate and check quantitative data (from questionnaire surveys and site observations) with qualitative findings (from interviews). Its purpose was to complement the findings of the questionnaire in situations where the questions posed during the interviews varied from the questionnaire.

Data Collection and Sampling Techniques

The study used both primary and secondary data. These data were collected in using the structured interview guide and a questionnaire. The respondents include traditional leaders, traditional priestesses/priestesses, family heads and community leaders in Cape Coast, Kumasi and Teshie. Using the snowballing and purposive sampling techniques, the three study areas were divided into smaller areas relative to the targeted chiefs, priestesses/priestesses, family heads and community leaders. A total of 85 participants were used for the analysis. The reason for using this technique was that the researcher has been granted the freedom to pick respondents who, in his view, are sources of appropriate data that will satisfy the objectives of the analysis (Sarantakos, 1998; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The traditional leaders were selected regardless of the role they hold in the group. With the traditional rulers, the researcher picked all of them from the research areas in each community, as each of the research areas was of paramount importance with its own Omanhene (paramount chief). Brempong (2006) argued that it was a taboo that shaped a chief (what he should be). The chief/king must have an aura of tradition. He must have charm as well as a picturesque figure, too. Since leadership in these communities is a sacred obligation, all these characteristics cannot be accomplished without

being guided by taboos. Among the traditional priests and priestesses in the research regions, there is a state priest for each of the traditional councils. Like the chiefs, the heads of the family often protect family property by mobilizing family members to protect family property, particularly land. They are custodians of all family land, and in conservative cultures it is a sacred obligation for all forms of property to be properly disposed of for the good of both the living and future generations.

In line with the study by Bryman (2007), descriptive analysis was utilized. For categorical data, frequencies and percentages (%) were used to describe each variable for the population. Demographic information from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, and where data was organised into frequency counts and converted into percentages, means and standard deviations were used for the research questions. But, qualitative data from interviews were grouped thematically and analysed.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the ages of the respondents to the questionnaire. None of the respondents for the research was below 18 years of age. Of the respondents chosen for the research, only 2 (2.4%) were between the ages of 60 and above, 31 (36.5%) were also between ages 20 and 29, 34 (40.0%) were between the ages of 30 and 39, 14 (16.5%) were between 40 and 49 years of age while 4 (4.7 %) were between 50 and 59 years of age. The below age ranges indicate that all the respondents chosen for the research were matured enough to know the topic under discussion. It was therefore hoped that the true information would be given due to their maturity. Out of a total of the 85 respondents chosen for the research, 24 representing 28.2% were junior high school graduates, 14 representing 16.5% were diploma holders. It is clear from the research that the academic attainment of the respondent is dominated by people with a degree. The implication here is that if educational qualification is anything to go by and also if it has a corresponding effect on development, then, it could be said that the knowledge base of the participants was high.

Table 1

Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29 years old	31	36.5
	30-39 years old	34	40.0
	40-49 years old	14	16.5
	50-59 years old	4	4.7
	60 years old and above	2	2.4
	71-80 years old	1	4.5
	MSLC	2	2.4
Educational status	JHS	24	28.2
	SHS	12	14.1
	GCE O-level	4	4.7
	GCE A-level	1	1.2
	Diploma	14	16.5
	1st degree	25	29.4
	Postgraduate	3	3.5

Source: Field Survey (2019)

The respondents had an adult work force with a mean age of 33.42 with the minimum age at 20 and maximum age at 60 years old. It however had a standard deviation of 926.19. The bulk of the respondents belonged to the 30-49 years age group (see Table 1). If the distribution is done in terms of “youthful” (20-29 years old), “active” (30-49 years old), and “retiring age” (50-60 years old) groups, it would be seen that only 36.47% respondents fall within the “youthful” age group, 56.47% fall within the “active” age and 7.06% within the “retiring” age group.

Indigenous Understanding of What Constitutes Governance and Good Governance?

The result in (see Table 2) revealed that traditional governance contributes to participants’ understanding of what constitutes governance and good governance. Most of the statements that pointed to governance had mean scores between 1.8 and 1.9 which indicates a moderate response. Participants agree that governance is about how people are to behave in a given society, decision-making processes rest in the hands of those involved in governance, actors in governance are accountable to the people of the community as well as leaders are encouraged to make tough decisions that are in the interest of the people. Again participants’ knowledge on governance is based on the statement that those in charge of governance are chosen from a particular lineage in the society ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 1.09$) indicating a positive response which supports the fact that participants know what constitutes good governance and who those actors of governance are. The results also indicate that participants have knowledge of governance ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.918$) and this further proves that the participants are aware of what constitutes governance in their societies.

Table 2

Traditional Governance

Statement—I know that:	M	SD
Chiefs are in charge of governance in my area	1.95	0.872
Governance is about how people are to behave in a given society	1.80	0.799
Those in charge of governance are chosen from a particular lineage in the society	2.14	1.09
Chiefs and family heads are involved in the politics of the society	1.94	0.777
Decision-making processes rest in the hands of those involved in governance	1.80	0.799
Taboos are associated with the position of being an actor in governance in the society	2.40	1.3
Actors in governance obtain their authority from different sectors	2.12	0.918
Actors in governance are accountable to the people of the community	1.94	0.904
Actors are committed to the safety and security of the people in the community	1.86	0.789
Leaders are encouraged to make tough decisions that are in the interest of the people	1.75	0.815

Source: Field survey (2019).

The Current Nature of Governance Related Taboos in the Three Societies

Table 3 shows that out of a total of 85 respondents who responded, 54.1% agree to the view that their governance personalities can be tabooed, while 11.8% disagreed with the view that the elders are those who train people to be in positions to govern people. On the other hand, 52 (61.2%) agreed with the statement that to be an actor of governance, one has to be respected and held high in the society, with 7.1% being in disagreement with the statement. The mean score calculated for the statement is 1.86 ($SD = 0.693$) indicating a positive response. 38.8% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree against 5.9% who disagree that the assertion that when they break a taboo, they have to face the repercussions of it. On that same view, 51.8% agreed while 3.5% strongly disagreed. On the whole, the mean score of the statement was 2.93 ($SD = 1.275$). Furthermore, it was

realized that, governance is about how people are treated in their societies. This is evident in their responses as 42.4% agreed while 3.5% strongly disagreed. However, 28.2% were in disagreement with the statement with 25.9% strongly agreeing. The mean score of 2.09 ($SD = 0.826$) depict that respondent rated the statement positively. For the statement “specific taboos are for specific people”, 50.6% agreed while 20.0% disagreed but 21.2% strongly agreed. Using mean scores and standard deviation values proves that there are governance related taboos in the three societies.

Table 3

Taboos and Governance

Statement	Response						Mean	Std. dev.
	N	SA	A	D	SD			
Governance is about how people are treated in their societies	85	22 (25.9)	36 (42.4)	24 (28.2)	3 (3.5)		2.09	0.826
The elders, chiefs and clansmen are in charge of governance in the society	85	27 (31.8)	31 (36.5)	26 (30.6)	1 (1.2)		2.01	0.824
To be an actor of governance, one has to be respected and held high in the society	85	24 (28.2)	52 (61.2)	6 (7.1)	3 (3.5)		1.86	0.693
A governance personality can be tabooed	85	18 (21.2)	46 (54.1)	14 (16.5)	7 (8.2)		2.10	0.837
The elders are those who train people to be in positions to govern people	85	26 (30.6)	46 (54.1)	10 (11.8)	3 (3.5)		1.88	0.747
Specific taboos are for specific people	85	18 (21.2)	43 (50.6)	17 (20.0)	7 (8.2)		2.15	0.852
When I break a taboo, I have to face the repercussions of it	85	33 (38.8)	44 (51.8)	5 (5.9)	3 (3.5)		1.74	0.726

Role of Taboos in the Contemporary Indigenous Governance

Out of a total of 85 respondents, 38.3% agreed that without taboos, the society cannot be governed while 17.6% disagreed to the issue. However, 35.3% strongly agreed with 8.2% strongly disagreeing. The mean score calculated yielded a result of 1.99 ($SD = 0.932$) indicating a positive response to the fact that respondents' thinks without taboos, the society cannot be governed. With 44.7% respondents strongly agreeing that taboos are good for every society, 15.3% strongly disagreed with this assertion. On the contrary, 41.2% agree that taboos put people in check in the society, which is very true because if one is not checked in the society, he/she may do things abnormally. Nine point four percent rather remained in disagreement to this statement because they felt this is not right to use taboos to check them in the society. Again, 43.5% of respondents agree that taboos are attached to governance positions in the society while 14.1% disagreed. However, 30.6% strongly agreed while 11.8 strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 2.07 ($SD = 0.961$) respondents again positively responded to the statement. Most of the respondents agreed to the fact that the importance of taboos has been made clear to them in the society, there are mechanisms in place to check whether an offence is committed willfully or not, punishment meted out to offenders are justified in the society and punishment can be redeemed. This supported the assumption that taboos play any role in the contemporary indigenous governance of the research areas.

Table 4

Role of Taboos in the Contemporary Indigenous Governance

Statement	Response						
	N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. dev.
Taboos are good for every society	85	38 (44.7)	24 (28.2)	13 (15.3)	10 (11.8)	1.94	1.039
Taboos put people in check	85	40 (47.1)	35 (41.2)	8 (9.4)	2 (2.4)	1.67	0.746
When I break a taboo willfully, I will suffer the consequences	85	25 (29.4)	48 (56.5)	9 (10.6)	3 (3.5)	1.88	0.730
When I break a taboo unwillfully, I will suffer the consequences	85	15 (17.6)	44 (51.8)	22 (25.9)	4 (4.7)	2.18	0.774
The importance of taboos has been made clear to me in the society	85	24 (28.2)	40 (47.1)	16 (18.8)	4 (4.7)	2.12	1.358
There are mechanisms in place to check whether an offence is committed willfully or not	85	20 (23.5)	32 (37.6)	21 (24.7)	12 (14.1)	2.29	0.986
Punishment meted out to offenders are justified in the society	85	18 (21.2)	51 (60.0)	9 (10.6)	7 (8.2)	2.06	0.807
Punishment can be redeemed	85	15 (17.6)	44 (51.8)	21 (24.7)	5 (5.9)	2.19	0.794
Without taboos, the society cannot be governed	85	30 (35.3)	33 (38.8)	15 (17.6)	7 (8.2)	1.99	0.932
Taboos are attached to governance positions in the society	85	26 (30.6)	37 (43.5)	12 (14.1)	10 (11.8)	2.07	0.961

Discussions

The powers of the chiefs, during the post-colonial era, were restricted to dealing with customary matters and playing an advisory role, and they were banned from politics despite their loyalty to the colony as Tangwa (1996) suggested that traditional African leadership and government structures can be interpreted as a harmonious marriage between autocratic dictatorship and popular democracy. But despite all the challenges that have been thrown at the chieftaincy institution, it retains the legitimacy it has held since the pre-colonial period to a significant extent: as representative of its people history, culture, values, religion and sovereignty. Chiefs as agents of development in their respective communities cannot be overemphasized. This goes to confirm the assertion of Owusu (1997) and Blom (2002) who contend that the people of the king are well aware of the duties which he owes to them, as they are of the duties which they owe to him, and are in a position to put pressure on him to discharge those duties. This, they do, by providing security in the areas, justice and mobilisation of the people to undertake communal labour for the execution of development projects. In reality, Lule (1995) argued that the establishment of traditional leaders as part of the cultural heritage of African people is an integral part of their fundamental right to culture. This explains why development becomes stalled in the areas where there are no substantive chiefs or there are protracted chieftaincy disputes. Even the land to be released for development must come from the chief, who is traditionally the custodian of the stool land in his/her, area of jurisdiction. This chapter deals with the results from the analysis of the interviews from the research areas. The aura of sacrality associated with the chief is embedded in the historicity of the chiefly office which is linked to the ancestors of the land whose stool the chief occupies. Traditional Akan chieftaincy institution is mostly based on the kingship system. Under this, the head of the family who is also the leader of the community is said to have derived his position from the link between the living and the departed ancestors who are also themselves the founders of the kingship group. For a person to be selected and installed as a chief in the Ga Society, the person should be from one of the three royal houses among which the privilege rotates.

Components and principles such as sovereignty and minority rights, and acceptance of their relevance to conventional indigenous governance approaches, are significant (von der Porten, 2012).

Traditional authority is built up by roles, customs and practices that are accepted into the ritual of life. Certain things do occur because they used to happen that way (precedent). Traditionalism in this regard is then seen as a psychic attitude-set for habitual workaday life and the belief in everyday routine as an inviolable form of conduct. The domination resting upon this basis is called traditional authority. Those who for some reason of birth or ritual selection represent the traditional custom inherit authority and position as a commodity invested in them and they are not to be challenged. In this traditional set-up, the legacy of passing it on is mostly encouraged from one generation to another.

Traditionally, the functions of traditional leaders include, among others, leading tribal government, maintaining local culture, leading ceremonies, applying customary law, granting or confiscating land, confiscating stolen cattle and promoting the wellbeing of their communities. Traditional leaders have somehow lost some of their traditional functions but rather fulfil modern functions such as, *inter alia*, advising central and local government, assisting in development planning and implementation. Chiefs have long been central to Ghanaian society. The Ghanaian constitutions provide evidence of this continuing trend. Even the most radical constitution did not abolish chieftaincy.

One major reason why traditional leaders continued to exist in this critical time is that their existence is deeply rooted in the culture of their people. They are much more closely associated with culture or the tradition of their people. They are the mediators; they are the mouthpieces of civilians who are unable to express themselves, and above all leaders of leaders. Even in pre-colonial times, the tribe was in some sense a category of interaction. Among other things, tribal loyalties explain certain divisions, oppositions, alliances, and modes of behaviour between, and towards, different human groups. This solidifies the loyalties that each man has to his tribe. Today, the tribe is still being seen as a category of interaction, but it operates within a different, and much wider, system. Social changes have given tribal loyalties a new importance and a new relevance.

While generally, the taboos are adhered to and hence maintaining the prestige of the institution of chieftaincy and ensuring good governance, the few taboos, which are broken by some of the chiefs, are threatening the sanctity attached to the chieftaincy institution. This has implications for governance. The research revealed that among three societies, people who breached taboos were detected through eye witness account. However, in a situation where acts point to the fact that a taboo has been breached and culprit cannot be detected or nobody reports about the act, the culprit can be detected through divination by the state priest and should this method be used to arrest the culprit, the penalty slapped on the culprit is usually expensive. On the part of leaders who breach governance taboos, respondents were of the view that often it is difficult to know except a whistle blower informs the community or the elders. Some also had the position that since political office is always under contestation, contestants are always on the lookout for a breach on the part of a leader to bring charges for his removal.

The analytical view of the leadership does not discriminate between the various styles of chieftaincies and the different hierarchies under the same types. In comparison, this perspective has neglected to understand what democracy and transparency really mean to diverse societies and individuals around the world. Nor does the latter line have some grounding in the face of other inquiries. Chiefs are responsible for religious functions, land custody, communal well-being, participatory grassroots government and conflict resolution (Mireku, 1991; Pobee, 1991; Owusu, 1997). Customary institutions are often blamed for being undemocratic, particularly on

the grounds that the freedom to select one's own leaders is a basic and fundamental human right in contemporary democracy. This is the case because the leadership is more or less "a caste in which only birth members can postulate the role of chiefs" (Ribot, 2002, p. 69). "Elected leaders, on the other hand, receive their legitimacy by way of a popular vote" (Molotlegi, 2002, p. 1). The problem here is then that, as long as the rule of law is founded on heredity and ascription, it is fundamentally undemocratic. The likelihood of rural citizens having the right to choose which institutions or persons to govern is immediately omitted. Traditional leaders derive their claim of legitimacy, authority and, therefore, sovereignty from their pre-colonial origins, while the contemporary African state is the founder and descendant to the forced colonial state. Proponents of traditional leadership structures claim that these institutions cannot be literally legislated out of existence or simply confined to the traditional social domain, separate from the new world of civil society (Owusu, 1997; Blom, 2002; Senyonjo, 2004).

Keeping of taboos ensured good harmony between the visible and therefore the invisible world. Those found guilty of great moral or legal violations are made to undergo ritual cleansing as a way of ethical or ontological purification and transformation. People gave the impression to remember that behind prohibitions laid truth meaning of taboos—preserving harmony and well-being in and of the community: Life and its quality was seen as crucial and therefore the society applied a spread of methods to preserve it and transmit it, especially through taboos. While well-being virtues include modernization, democratization qualitative education, and demanding consciousness, the well-being vices include dependency, bribery and corruption, unwarranted military interventions, dictatorships and therefore the abuse of human rights, etc. Consequently, if one could show that a given set of taboos, promote some well-being, virtues and help diminish some well-being vices, one would have shown by implication that some taboos promote development and harmonious living.

The uniqueness of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana is that almost every community has a chief. Chiefs are considered important stakeholders in government and are frequently selected to serve on the country's sensitive committees and boards at different levels. Despite the official exclusion of chiefs from the Autonomous government system, a number of chiefs in Ghana have justified their importance and prestige by undertaking numerous development projects, in particular the promotion of education, health and environmental conservation. They (chiefs) offer leadership and protection, peace and security for their people. As traditional heads, chiefs are the first port of call, even by politicians when on campaign tours. The chiefs represent the spiritual embodiment of the people, mediating between the living and the dead (Busia, 1968). However, it may be argued that the chieftaincy institution impedes the pace of development because it reduces the relevance of the state within the areas of social services (Mamdani, 1996; Ntsebeza, 2005; Osaghae, 1987). Furthermore, because of the hereditary nature of chieftaincy, it renders it incompatible with democratic governance, which needs competitive elections mutually of its cornerstones (Ntsebeza, 2005). The chief, as traditional ruler, make sure that resources are wisely exploited in order that generations yet unborn can have access to those resources.

Leadership is an epitome of tradition in Ghana's democratic system. Ghana is only one of several countries where younger governance practices have developed authorities. While chieftaincies are often seen as outdated institutions, there are few signs that their significance is decreasing. Surveys reveal significant and persistent support for traditional authorities and institutions in a variety of African countries, including Ghana (Holzinger, Kern, & Kromrey, 2016). Traditional authority is still strong, particularly in rural areas, where

village chiefs and elders still have important roles to play. Chieftaincy institutions are highly important whether they can complement or replace poor or non-existent state institutions. Their organizational structure varies by tribe or territory, but in general, the villages belong to subdivisions, divisions and, finally, paramountcies. Traditional authorities are indispensable, because they form a major part of the country's history, culture, political and governance systems. The institution of chieftaincy is a basic vehicle for mobilising people for development. It also serves as the most effective link between the people at the grassroots level and the central government. Chieftaincy constitutes crucial resources that have the potential to promote democratic governance and to facilitate access of rural communities to public services. However, understanding the dynamics of traditional authorities entails distinguishing between the social positions of the chiefs and that of the elders in providing some protection for the interests of their communities in order to maintain the legitimacy of their leadership. Chiefs have been the unifying factor not only in their communities but also the nation as a whole. Although, some people may hold a different view and would not consider this potential, there is evidence to suggest that service delivery in rural areas has been smoother in areas where government structures had good relations with traditional leaders, than in areas where relations were not good (Miller, 1968). Good governance can only materialise through the articulation of indigenous political values and practices and their harmonisation with modern democratic practices (Ayittey, 2002). Understanding the dynamics of traditional authorities entails distinguishing between the social positions of the chiefs and that of the elders in providing some protection for the interests of their communities in order to maintain the legitimacy of their leadership.

The chief frequently acts as a spokeswoman for his culture and for the outside world. It has been recognized that the decision-making position of the Leader is indispensable. It initiates change, implements technologies and methods for community growth. As a disturbance handler, he solves disagreements between separate groups in his families. This is consistent with the studies by Boafo-Arthur (2006), Lutz and Linder (2004) which show that customary courts are said to be common and often resorted to because they are readily available, inexpensive, quick and comprehensible. It was also founded that the chief's bargaining position is just as critical as that of representing his group in achieving agreements with other parties. These positions underpin the argument that the Chief has a vital role to play in the municipal government. It must be noted explicitly that the administration of localities in the country would be difficult if it is left alone in the hands of central and local government officials without the help, motivation and protection of the country's representatives. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that, without the successful involvement of the chiefs, it would be difficult for the central government to produce the growth programmers as set out in its agenda. Traditional authorities have long been mindful of the need for those who exert political authority to receive the active approval of the men and women over whom they exercise influence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study investigated the Role of traditional leaders in Governance structure through the observance of taboos in Cape Coast, Kumasi and Teshie societies of Ghana. From the results of the study and the discussion that proceeded, it can conclude that taboos play an important role in the traditional African society and keep to exercise its influence on the modern society as well. They help people to preserve moral rules that were helping them, as individuals and as communities, to live a peaceful and harmonious life. Again, chieftaincy is not based on high satisfaction with the way chiefs perform their tasks. People can simultaneously support the institution

of chieftaincy and be highly critical of the performance of certain chiefs or certain tasks. Individuals or clans who heed taboo rules are expected to be blessed with protection, good health, fertility, wellbeing and long life; whereas those who breach taboos are invoking the ancestors' anger and will be punished.

It can further be concluded that the Akans, Fantes and the Ga's are uniquely structured as far as their tradition and culture is concerned. This is so clear in their traditional administrative system as well as their beliefs and practices which promote unity and cooperation among them. With the observation of taboos in the three traditional societies with particular reference to chieftaincy, it was found out that traditional rulers occupy a unique position, therefore chiefs are expected to observe taboos in order to maintain certain standards to please their subjects. Taboos remain the prime factor of guiding principles of moral conduct towards the exploitation of natural resources in the community. Thus, the practice of taboos among the people of the three traditional societies remains very strong because it reinforces the communal values of solidarity, identity and unity among the people.

It is recommended that both citizens and non-citizens in these traditional societies should be made to appreciate, respect and observe taboos associated with taboo days as a means to promote unity, peace and governance. This can be done by establishing cultural centers in the various communities to educate people about the need to uphold cultural values such as taboo days in the area.

Furthermore, the district assembly in collaboration with the traditional council of the traditional areas integrate the cultural values into policies and programmes by coming out with by-laws to guide the citizens towards proper governance structures with the aim of strengthening grassroots governance.

References

- Abotchie, C. (2006). Has the position of the chief become anachronistic in the contemporary Ghanaian politics? In I. K. Odotei and A. K. Awedoba (Eds.), *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development* (pp. 123-127). Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Arhin, K. (1985). *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Past and present*. Accra: Sedco Publishing.
- Assimeng, M. (1996). Traditional leaders' capability and disposition for democracy: The example of Ghana. A paper presented in the International Conference on Traditional and Contemporary Forms of Local Participation and Self-Government in Africa, 20-23 August 1996 Nairobi, Kenya.
- Ayittey, G. B. N. (2002). Why democracy is important for African development. Retrieved from <http://www.responduganda.org/respondugandaspeech.htm>
- Bekoe, A. (2007). Fifty years of traditional authority in the socio-political development of Ghana. A keynote at a workshop held from 27th-28th February, Chairman of the Council of State, Accra.
- Bentsi-Enchil, K. (1971). *Institutional challenges of our time*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Blair, H. (2000). Participation and accountability at the periphery: Democratic local governance in six countries. *World Development*, 28(1), 21-39.
- Blom, A. (2002). Ambiguous political space: Chiefs, land and the poor in rural Mozambique. In N. Webster and L. Eng-Perdersen (Eds.), *In the name of the poor: contesting political space for poverty reduction*. New York and London: Zed Books.
- Boafo-Arthur, K. (2006). Chieftaincy in Ghana: Challenges and prospects in the 21st century. In I. Odotei and A. Awedoba (Eds.), *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development* (pp. 145-168). Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Boamah, D. A. (2015). Akan indigenous religio-cultural beliefs and environmental preservation: The role of taboos. Retrieved from <http://www.queensu.ca/religion/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.rlgnewww/files/files/rels/grad/Daniel%20Asante%20Boamah%20MRP.pdf>
- Boaten, A. (1994). The changing role of the Queen mother in the Akan polity. *Research Review*, 9(1), 1-13.
- Brempong, O. (2006). Chieftaincy and traditional taboos. In I. Odotei and A. K. Awedoba (Eds.), *Chieftaincy in Ghana culture, governance and development*. Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Bryman, A. (2007). Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1, 8-22.
- Busia, K. A. (1968). *The position of the chief in the modern political system of Ashanti: A research of the influence of contemporary social change on Ashanti political institution*. London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd.

- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Denters, B. (2011). Local governance. In M. Bevir (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of governance* (pp. 313-329). New York: SAGE Publications.
- Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. (2003). *Doing social science research* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Inc.
- Fynn, J. K. (1974). The structure of Greater Asante: Another view. *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 15(1), 1-9.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2005). Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7, Poverty Trends (2005-2017): Redbow Investment Limited, Accra.
- Greene, J. C., & Caracelli, V. J. (1997). Defining and describing the paradigm issue in mixed-method evaluation. In J. C. Greene and V. J. Caracelli (Eds.), *Advances in mixed-method evaluation: The challenges and benefits of integrating diverse paradigms. New Directions for Evaluation, No. 74* (pp. 5-17). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gyekye, K. (1996). *African cultural values: An introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company.
- Holzinger, K., Kern, F. G., & Kromrey, D. (2016). The dualism of contemporary traditional governance and the state: Institutional setups and political consequences. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69, 469-481.
- Kendie, S. B., & Guri, B. Y. (2004). Traditional institutions, culture and development: The Asafo group in the Mankessim-Nkwanta traditional area. Centre for Development Studies, Cape Coast, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- Lule, G. (1995). The role of traditional leaders in the 21st century (Unpublished paper, Sheraton Hotel, Kampala, Uganda, 1995).
- Lutz, G., & Linder, W. (2004). *Traditional structures in local governance for local development*. Switzerland: Institute of Political Science, University of Berne.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, D. C., & Salkind, N. J. (2019). The case study. In *Handbook of research design & social measurement* (1st ed., pp. 163-164). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Miller, N. N. (1968). The political survival of traditional leadership. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6(2) 183-198.
- Mireku, E. (1991). *Which way Ghana? Restoring hope and confidence in the Ghanaian*. Accra: Asuo Peabo Ltd.
- Molotegi, L. (2002). *Hereditary rule in the age of democracy*. Presented on 31st October, 2002 at Brown University, MacMillan Hall.
- Mukyala-Mukiika, R. (1998). Traditional leader and decentralization: Decentralization and civil society in Uganda. In A. Nsibambi (Ed.), *The quest for good governance*. Kampala: Foundation Publishers.
- Ntsebeza, L. (2005). *Democracy compromised: Chiefs and the politics of the land in South Africa*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Odotei, I. K., & Awedoba, A. K. (Eds.). (2006). *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development*. Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Odotei, I. K., & Hagan, G. P. (Eds.). (2002). *The king returns: Enstoolment of Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II and the Ayikesege (Great Funeral) of Otumfuo Opoku Ware II*. Madina: Royal Gold Publishers.
- Ollennu, J. N. (1977). Chieftaincy in Ghana. *Sankofa*, (II), 35-48.
- Osaghae, E. E. (1987). The passage from the past to the present in African political thought: The question of relevance. In Z. S. Ali, J. A. A. Ayoade, and A. A. B. Agbaje (Eds.), *African traditional political thought and institutions*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization.
- Osei, J. (2006). The value of taboos for biodiversity and sustainable development. Retrieved from: <http://www.jsd-africa.com/jsda/fall2006/pdf/Arc>
- Owusu, M. (1997). Domesticating democracy: Culture, civil society and constitutionalism in Africa. *Society for Comparative Research of Society and History*, 1, 120-152.
- Pobee, J. S. (1991). *Religion and politics in Ghana: Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia XLVIII*. Accra: Asempa Publishers.
- Ray, D. I., & Reddy, P. S. (Eds.). (2003). *Grassroots governance? Chiefs in Africa and the Afro-Caribbean*. Canada: University of Calgary Press.
- Ribot, J. C. (2002). African decentralization: Local actors, powers and accountability. Paper Number 8, *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Program on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*. December, 2002, Washington, DC.
- Rocco, T. S., Bliss, L. A., Gallagher, S., Pérez-Prado, A., Alacaci, C., Dwyer, E. S., Fine, J. C., Pappamihel, N. E. (2003). The pragmatic and dialectical lenses: Two views of mixed methods use in education. In A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The handbook of mixed methods in the social and behavioural sciences* (pp. 595-615). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Sarantakos, S. (1998). *Social research*. (2nd ed.). China: Macmillan Publishers.
- Sarpong, P. (1977). *Girls' nobility rites in Ashanti*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation.

- Senyonjo, J. (2004). Traditional institutions and land. Retrieved from: <http://www.federo.com/Pages/TraditionalInstitutionsandland.htm>
- Skalnik, P. (2004). Authority versus power: Democracy in Africa must include original African institutions. *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 37, 109-121.
- Smith, B. C. (2007). *Good governance and development*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Tangwa, G. B. (1996). *Democracy and meritocracy: Philosophical essays with talks from an African perspective*. Glienic, Berlin: Galda and Wilch.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the social and behavioral sciences. In A. Tashakorri and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioural research* (pp. 3-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Von der Porten, S. (2012). Canadian indigenous governance literature: A review. *Alter Native: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 8(1), 1-14.